

Minutes of DAAC Meeting

Attendance

DAAC members present were: Seren Derin, Chair; Joan Rising; Jim MacRostie, and Dana Goddard.

Others present were Gerry Weiss, Select Board Representative; Nathaniel Malloy, DAAC staff liaison; and members of the public Jane Gamache

Absent: Joe Tringali, Vice-chair; Irene Barrelet, Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Derin called the meeting to order at 3:09 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Committee needs to fill one vacancy and is eager to find a new member.

Ms. Derin said that even an accessible structure may be difficult for some to maneuver in and around; there are levels of accessibility. As an example she cited doors that open towards a ramp, making it almost impossible to use the ramp and open the door at the same time. She said that accessible should mean people with disabilities can use a facility on their own without requiring help from another individual.

MINUTES

Minutes from the June, 2009 meeting were reviewed and discussed. No corrections were found. Ms. Rising made a motion to accept the minutes; Mr. MacRostie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to accept the June minutes as submitted.

NEW BUSINESS

496 North Pleasant Street—Application for Variance

Mr. Malloy explained that the Theta Chi Fraternity at 496 North Pleasant Street has applied for a variance from the Architectural Access Board to seek relief from making an existing bathroom fully accessible during renovations. The applicant states that the building itself is not fully accessible and that the bathroom being renovated is not accessible because it is on the second floor and the building does not have an elevator. The renovations include removal of existing shower stalls, toilets, sinks, floor and fixtures, with replacements going in the same location.

Mr. Weiss said that he believed every fraternity on campus was not accessible due to age.

Ms. Gamache commented that a significant number of people, up to forty (40), stay at the fraternity.

Ms. Derin said that since the building is not accessible, the renovations do not need to be accessible.

The Committee agreed with Ms. Derin's statement, and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the variance.

Spring Street Project

Mr. Malloy presented the preliminary plan to widen the sidewalks from 6' to 14' along the section of Spring Street that crosses through the Town Common by narrowing the driving lanes. The sidewalks would have a beveled curb so that vehicles for the farmers market could drive onto the sidewalk to sell their goods. The plan also included a performing area and bump outs near the crosswalks.

Ms. Derin asked if widening the sidewalks would benefit the farmers market.

Mr. Weiss said that the road is currently so wide it feels like a parking lot, and it seems as though many drivers and pedestrians are unaware that this is actually a street. Although narrowing the right of way may facilitate traffic, he believed the plan narrowed the traffic lanes too much, making it difficult to pull into and out of a parking space.

Ms. Rising questioned if farmers would really drive over the curb to sell goods on the sidewalk, and cautioned that there is not much road space if they do not.

Ms. Rising asked how the curb area would be plowed and cleared of snow in the winter.

Ms. Derin said she had concerns with the safety of people pulling out of their parking space on such a narrow road.

Other

None

OLD BUSINESS

Emergency Contact Information

Ms. Derin said the advertisement looked good in the paper with big lettering making it easy to read.

Ms. Rising suggested the advertisement be published in the Senior Center Newsletter and be distributed at the Bangs Community Center.

Private Parking Lots

Ms. Derin said that she believed most businesses would not voluntarily agree to allow police to ticket cars that violate handicapped parking on private property because it would be bad for business.

Ms. Rising reiterated a common concern that currently it is difficult to find an HP space in the downtown because of the number of (temporary) placards issued by the RMV.

Ms. Derin said that even if businesses offer HP spaces, they often do not provide ample space for a van to park and unload. She said it is very difficult for vans to navigate the HP parking spaces in the Town Center.

Mr. Weiss suggested that the downtown needed more HP spaces, especially van spots and unloading areas.

Ms. Derin said that regulations (local, state, federal) need to keep pace with the aging population, which may change the criteria for distributing temporary placards.

Ms. Rising asked if there was any statistical evidence to support an increase in HP parking spaces in the Town Center.

High School Auditorium

Mr. MacRostie acknowledged that the auditorium is probably as accessible as it can be, but would like the Committee to make a site visit.

Ms. Derin also suggested that members of the DAAC schedule a site visit to inspect the accessibility improvements made recently to the auditorium.

Jones Library Parking

Mr. Weiss asked what is involved to fix the unloading area for one of the HP spaces as the Jones Library.

Ms. Rising questioned whether the parking lot was every really designed as it has occasionally changed parking configuration and traffic flow. For instance, before the angled parking spaces, one could easily drive to the end of the lot at the rear of the building and turn around to leave the parking lot. Now, with the angled parking, it makes it difficult to do this. She suggested a UMass landscape architecture studio could design a parking lot and entry sequence.

Ms. Rising also suggested the parking spaces be relocated from the eastern side of the lot to the western side, so that the HP spaces are directly in front of the library entrance.

Other

None

Next Meeting(s)

August 11, 2009 @ 3:00 pm.

September 15, 2009 @ 3:00 pm.

October 13, 2009 @ 3:00 pm.

November 10, 2009 @ 3:00 pm.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Nathaniel Malloy, staff liaison